

DATE 3/5/2013

SB 101

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RE: Montana Senate Bill 101

Dear House FWP Committee Members:

The Permit to Hunt From a Vehicle (PTHFV) was introduced by Montana FWP to facilitate hunting by individuals with significant mobility impairments. The PTHFV provides access and enables its holders to shoot from a vehicle as necessary due to their mobility limits. Over time land management agencies (USFS and BLM) designated disability access roads and use the PTHFV for eligibility. Some private landowners allow privileged access to PTHFV holders.

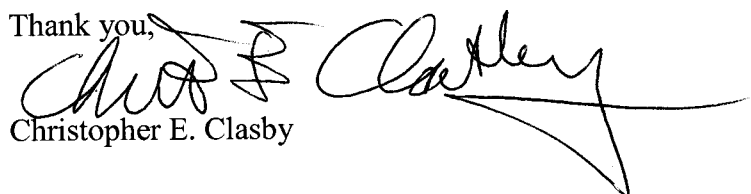
Prior to 2001, the eligibility criteria for PTHFV were objective. The 2001 legislative changes to those eligibility criteria inadvertently make it hard for physicians to measure and difficult for FWP to determine eligibility. This change resulted in overuse of the permit and qualification by hunters for whom it isn't intended or don't need it. Since 2001 applicants in reasonable physical condition qualify for the same PTHFV as someone without arm or leg function due to permanent disability. Once qualified, the holder is permanently eligible unless the statute changes.

Since the 2001 eligibility criteria change, the number of Montanans eligible for a PTHFV has increased over 500% to approximately 10,000 permit holders. This huge increase has resulted in the opposite effect of the permit's original intent. Because only a limited number of hunters per day can access designated PTHFV driving areas, hunters with significant mobility impairments have limited opportunities. Secondly, some private landowners inclined to create disability access agreements with FWP's Block Management choose not to when they realize 10,000 Montanans would be eligible. Finally, the public opinion of the PTHFV and those who hold it has become negative because so many people see it as far too easy to get and take advantage of.

SB 101 is a measure to return the PTHFV to its original intent in order to benefit hunters with significant mobility impairments. This bill makes eligibility criteria objective and easy for eligible medical professionals to measure and certify, FWP to provide, and Enforcement officials to enforce. It is also a measure of proper conservation and wildlife stewardship by disallowing uneven leverage over game animals by Montana hunters.

As a lifetime sportsman, a disabled hunter since 1991, and with concern about Montana's conservation and wildlife, I ask you to pass SB 101 to restore respect and purpose to the PTHFV.

Thank you,



Christopher E. Clasby